



Downtown Revitalization and Community Development Work Group

August 15, 2011

Strengths

1. Broad diverse, historic stock of buildings
2. Physical relationship between HE and its students and downtown
3. Attraction of small communities
4. Regional planning boards with background in regional strategic planning – framework
5. Growing pool of committed developers
6. Local pride of each town
7. Residential opportunities
8. Many arts and cultural destinations located within downtowns
9. Historic structures
10. History of achievement and accomplishment, “can do” history
11. Affordable cost of living
12. Rivers running through downtowns
13. Clean water
14. Residential opportunities – for young professionals and aging baby boomers
15. Changing lifestyle choices – downtown housing
16. Natural resources, lakes, rivers, geography
17. Interested small business owners in downtown development
18. Downtowns have high quality activities that put feet on the street
19. Municipal parks
20. Collaboration among downtown advocacy organizations throughout the region
21. Downtowns are inherently sustainable and green
22. In NYS award winning “main streets” program
23. Communities have invested in plans and initiatives that are in place and ready to go
24. Downtowns have built up infrastructure
25. Strong institutions of higher education
26. Interstate highways run through the region

Weaknesses

1. Poor attitudes of regional residents
2. Difficult to maintain a demographic balance – age, income, employment balance
3. Lack of knowledge of what a thriving downtown is – “expectation that we don’t go downtown because of lack of parking”
4. Downtowns do not always fit the standard economic development mode – measurement is jobs, plus investment, (a different formula)
5. Downtown revitalization is not traditional economic development
6. Disappearance of the Empire Zone – no incentives for small business development or developers - burdened with regulatory requirements
7. Very little direct incentives for small businesses
8. Restore NY program not renewed
9. Lack start up and gap financing
10. Inconsistent benefits programs throughout the region from IDA’s
11. Existing community centers do not have the support they need
12. Municipalities do not have any money to share for infrastructure upgrades and improvements
13. Infrastructure is aging and outdated, incomplete (fiber) to support today’s business functions
14. Vehicles coming through the communities are carrying too much weight and roads are deteriorating
15. Don’t know how to retain intellectual capital created in regional institutions of higher education
16. Lack of collaboration among municipalities, lots of competition within the region
17. People don’t get off the highways
18. Absence of state funding and municipalities capped, infrastructure changes increase developer expenses
19. Tax caps
20. Not a lot of coordination between political and community leadership – some hostility even
21. Lack of coordinated external marketing
22. Lack of coordinated signage
23. Lack promotion of local products
24. Lack of connectivity between various downtown areas
25. Not seen as a collaborative region
26. Misperception that downtowns are not safe
27. Failure to embrace diversity of the downtown community
28. Lack of communication between different levels of government and interagency approvals for business and property development

Opportunities

1. Physical relationship between Higher Education and downtown
2. Look at each main street as one larger business or target area
3. Downtown areas can be resources to connect to other areas of the regions
4. Trend - People want to live and work in downtowns, lifestyle choices, etc.
5. Marcellus shale – housing, retail, taxes, utilization and development of space
6. Leveraging the higher education and number of students in the region
7. Redevelopment of aging downtown buildings
8. Exploit extraordinary quality of life for a modest price
9. Proximity to major markets
10. Leverage the growing number of entrepreneurial ventures
11. Cultivate leadership among young people
12. Opportunity to more effectively promote and marketing the region
13. Waterfront development
14. College and universities need to fill opportunities to become new civic leaders
15. Small downtowns in our region are growing, don't have aging infrastructure
16. Major highways and accessibility to small towns
17. Focus on cultural and art opportunities, night life
18. Build rail service
19. Build upon the diversity within the small towns and urban centers

Threats

1. Absence of state funding and municipalities capped, infrastructure changes increase developer expenses
2. Natural gas may not be sustainable
3. Changing consumer habits and expectations
4. Tax structure is burdensome, particularly property taxes
5. Unfunded mandates to the local municipality and counties
6. Lack of financing and access to capital
7. Lack of rail service
8. Catskill watershed issue effects ability to develop
9. Static or not perceived as a growth area of the population
10. Continued growth of "sprawl"